



Global health and climate change: Moving from denial and catastrophic fatalism to positive action

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Abstract:

The health effects of climate change have had relatively little attention from climate scientists and governments. Climate change will be a major threat to population health in the current century through its potential effects on communicable disease, heat stress, food and water security, extreme weather events, vulnerable shelter and population migration. This paper addresses three health-sector strategies to manage the health effects of climate change-promotion of mitigation, tackling the pathways that lead to ill-health and strengthening health systems. Mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is affordable, and low-carbon technologies are available now or will be in the near future. Pathways to ill-health can be managed through better information, poverty reduction, technological innovation, social and cultural change and greater coordination of national and international institutions. Strengthening health systems requires increased investment in order to provide effective public health responses to climate-induced threats to health, equitable treatment of illness, promotion of low-carbon lifestyles and renewable energy solutions within health facilities. Mitigation and adaptation strategies will produce substantial benefits for health, such as reductions in obesity and heart disease, diabetes, stress and depression, pneumonia and asthma, as well as potential cost savings within the health sector. The case for mitigating climate change by reducing GHGs is overwhelming. The need to build population resilience to the global health threat from already unavoidable climate change is real and urgent. Action must not be delayed by contrarians, nor by catastrophic fatalists who say it is all too late.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Security, Food/Water Security, Human Conflict/Displacement, Sea Level Rise, Unspecified Exposure

Extreme Weather Event: Hurricanes/Cyclones

Food/Water Security: Food Access/Distribution

Geographic Feature: 

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Adaption/Mitigation): ☒

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease, Injury, Other Health Impact

Infectious Disease: General Infectious Disease

Other Health Impact: heat stress

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☒

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation, Mitigation

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

Resilience: ☒

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified